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## Temporary Exhibition from the Johnson Collection

**A**LTHOUGH it is customary to speak of local schools of painting—English, French, Spanish, as late as the eighteenth century, a glance round the gallery in which forty pictures of that period from the John G. Johnson Collection, are now exhibited will show that, except to the eye of the special student, their differences are not so great as their resemblances. Even in the seventeenth century the growing freedom of intercourse had made Italy the goal of all artist pilgrims and the fusion of styles had made rapid progress. In the period under review, not only did every artist of importance visit the holy land of art, but Italian painters lived and worked in almost every country of Europe.

This being premised, we may allow ourselves to classify the pictures, now on exhibition, into what are accepted as Schools. For the moment England was in the lead; Hogarth, Sir Joshua Reynolds, Gainsborough, Romney, with others, almost their peers, were producing portraits which excelled all others of their day, while the landscape painters, culminating in such men as Constable and Turner, carried on the torch lit by the great Dutchmen till it was caught up and carried on by the Frenchmen of the nineteenth century.

Watteau, Boucher, Fragonard, and a host of lesser lights made France in this century, artistically, a worthy peer of her ancient rival. The most important Italians of the day were the landscape men, Canaletto, Guardi and Marieschi, who, with Longhi, the painter of portraits and genre, painted in England as well as in Venice. In Spain, painting had almost ceased to exist until in the last half of the century Goya blazed out to revive the glories of Velasquez.

The present exhibition, consisting of only forty pictures, calls for no detailed description, but a few words may be devoted to the two selected for illustration.

The first is a masterly example of Hogarth's work in portraiture.\* The old lady it represents may be of some historic interest, in addition to her great merit as a study of character. She has always been known as "Mrs. Butler, Oliver Goldsmith's hostess," and an engraving of the picture exists in the British Museum, the only example known to survive of twenty-five copies, which it is said are all that were printed. One wonders if Mrs. Elizabeth Fleming, who was Goldsmith's landlady at Islington, may not have remarried before she was painted by Hogarth. It was to satisfy her claims on the shiftless poet that Dr. Johnson interested himself to sell the manuscript of "The Vicar of Wakefield" for £60.

The Fragonard is little more than a sketch, but charming in spirit and fresh and free technically, as is all his work. It is the study of an actor in the character of Gilles. The costume is the same as in Watteau's famous full length in the Louvre, though another performer is

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\* See Cover Design.



presented. Gilles seems to have made his first appearance in French comedy in 1702 in the person of Maillot. Before that the character was called Pierrot. Moliere who "took his own where he found it" adopted him, in the "Festin de Pierre" from the Pedrolino of the Italian original. He was the type of the French, as his predecessor had been that of the Italian, peasant servant, and was dressed by Moliere in the white blouse of his class, which he retained throughout all his metamorphoses. Early in the nineteenth century the names of this character seem to have become interchangeable, with an increasing preference for Pierrot.

HAMILTON BELL.